

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*Light Reading
For
Young Muslims*

*By
Javed Rafiq*

Sir Syed Memorial Library, Lahore

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Foreword:

A name that always warms my hearts is that of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. The image of that big bearded man who exudes such positivity reminds me always of his immense contribution to education and the enlightening of the Young Muslims.

It was his relentless fight against the obscurantist forces that led to the acquisition of modern knowledge by the Young Muslims of that time the foundations of The Pakistan had thus been laid. Unfortunately the obscurantist forces have prevailed again. Dynamic Leadership is lacking and the mulla is enjoying full advantage of the same.

A Muslim is much blessed because the Qur'an removes all intellectual and emotional cobwebs from the psyche. It frees the human mind of all unnatural bondages.

This comes from the knowledge that Allah's Laws are inexorable. The Correct comprehension of this concept frees the human mind of curses like magic, superstitions, prevailing concept of Taqdeer and predetermination, "mantas" and evil curses.

It is imperative that our youth i.e. boys and girls who wish to follow the Islamic way of life in its true Qur'anic spirit have to bow their heads and imbibe the permanent values enjoined by the Qur'an and not follow the myths falsely attached to the Muslim Faith. In so doing they will free themselves and the coming generations.

All this seems clear in the mind of Mr. Javed Rafique and I hope he will keep up such efforts in the footsteps of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan

Mussarat Chughtai



Javed Rafiq (1950)

Mr. Javed Rafiq is Karachi born Writer. His understanding of the Quran is through the eyes of scholars who have understood the great book of Allah in its true spirit and without cumbersome attachments. It is in this vein that he has penned the few lines on everyday subjects for young Muslims in this book with complete faith in Allah and His Last Messenger Hazrat Muhammed SAW.

Dr Saeed Ch.

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Introduction

In this short book I have only tried to drive away the myths from the minds of Believers in Allah, the prophet Muhammad SAW and the holy book of instructions for mankind, the Quran that the Prophet of Islam left behind after it was revealed to him by Allah. I believe that Islam is the most scientific religion in the world and it does not brook any myths or beliefs that have become disproven as human knowledge has developed. Besides I have taken advantage of the fact that the holy book of Islam, the Quran exhorts human beings especially Believers to apply their minds or use their intellect and those who do not use their intellect have been called by the Quran as being worse than animals.

I have made a humble effort in writing this small book but that certainly does not mean that I can not be corrected if necessary; only Allah is without blemish and being a human being I too can be corrected. As such if my ruminations can make the readers dwell on the subjects discussed herein or on any of their offshoots to come up with their own versions then my humble effort shall stand rewarded.

I shall not hold you any longer so please read on:

Javed Rafiq

Myths That We Believe In

'Myths that Muslims Believe In' is an attempt at dispelling many myths that become glued to the psyche of the average Muslim right from his childhood. These myths have been so ingrained in our minds by our elders that we tend to think of them not as 'how our elders interpret some part of the Quran' but as something that 'the Quran says' which it does not. It is simply something we wrongly believe the Quran says and this has been ingrained in the minds of our elders before us too from whom we learnt these, by some person who had totally closed his mind to accepting or learning the truths of this universe but who was also totally unaware of the basic truth of this universe, the 'maulvi' or the religious preacher who is quite uninitiated about the facts of this universe and world because he has hardly had any schooling.

The word 'maulvi' is a very respected term and is attributed to one who is very knowledgeable in religious affairs but lately it has become symbolic of one who is quite uninitiated in modern sciences, even in very simple truths of science, and sticks to the old myths which have later been disproven by science and which have served to

give our religion Islam a very unscientific face which is not true.

An example would serve to underline this fact: not so very long ago some of our preachers or 'maulvis' or imams of our mosques sincerely believed and vociferously preached that it was forbidden in Islam to get one's picture taken? Today only after a few years all of our Imams hold National Identity Cards with their pictures pasted on them!

They also preached till some years back that the use of loud-speakers was 'haraam' or forbidden in Islam but only a few years on they themselves are using the loud-speakers for giving the 'azaan' or call to prayers, as well as to read the 'khutba' or sermon at Friday prayers and conduct 'tilawat' i.e. recite the Qur'an over the loud-speakers!

Perhaps another example from the many available would seal the argument and that is that till a few years ago our religious preachers would not accept that man had indeed set foot on the moon but a few years later they started saying that the Quran has said fifteen hundred years ago that you can go to outer space with appropriate technology or means!

What is this initial foolishness on the part of some of our 'maulvis' due to? Certainly not due to willfully wrong interpretation as some would like to think because our

'maulvis' are certainly very Islam loving and would never knowingly make wrong interpretations of Islam. The wrong interpretation is simply due to the ignorance of most of our 'maulvis'. Only nowadays have they come to consider science as not something un-Islamic but as a means to re-discover Allah's creations. As such they now have no compunction in advocating the learning of science for religious students too.

Thus we see that education requires that we reconsider the verses or 'ayahs' of the Quran in the light of modern advancement. This does not mean that we must reconsider 'all ' the verses of the Quran but only those 'ayahs' which do not contain any specific orders of Allah, because the non-questionable 'awaits' shall always remain the same for example saying the 'names' or prayer, fasting in the month of Ramadan, giving 'Zapata' etc. Only those things which have nothing to do with religious beliefs and which are open to different interpretations should be adjudged in the light of modern advancements.

Notes:

Allah is Most Merciful

Allah is certainly the Most Beneficent and Most Merciful but we Muslims believe that He is so merciful that no matter what we do during our life time on earth, He will eventually pardon all our sins and send us to heaven!

To me, nothing could be farther than the truth. Allah has created unchangeable laws to follow for living as well as non living things. He has created the Universe and all things within it. All other creations in the universe follow the law created by Allah and they do not have the power to go against any of these laws; for example the Earth can only go around the sun and not move away anywhere else and that too at a fixed speed and a tree can only grow upwards and not in any other direction etc. That means that it is incumbent upon all things to follow the laws [the systems whereby they function] that have been ordained for them by Allah.

But man is a different sort of creation altogether. While his body follows the laws made by Allah inevitably like eating and drinking etc his mind has been granted the freedom of action according to his own sweet will. This freedom to act as he pleases is tempered by two things.

One is that every deed or action undertaken by man, good or bad, produces a result even though the result does not come necessarily before him immediately or it may never come before him in his life time on this earth but it is recorded without fail and may be made manifest in the life hereafter.

The other thing is that Allah sent the last prophet Muhammad SAW as He sent a large number of different prophets before him to guide mankind as to what is good or not good before Allah. This last Prophet Muhammad SAW left behind him a holy book called the Quran wherein all things necessary for a man's successful life here on this earth and which will be useful for him in the hereafter have been mentioned. The Quran also warns man that he may go to hell for eternity if the laws of Allah are not followed by him even though he has been given the choice of not following those laws!

In other words man is to be held responsible in the hereafter i.e. in the life after death that Allah will certainly give us as has been promised in the Quran and man will be credited with every good deed during his lifetime and be debited for every bad deed during his life time no matter how big or small that deed has been. If the good deeds are found to be more than the bad deeds then that man shall go to heaven where he will enjoy eternal bliss but if his bad deeds are found to be more

than his good deeds then he can be sure of going to hell and rotting there forever.

But we find every man saying that Allah is Most Merciful and He shall grant pardon eventually! Certainly Allah is most merciful but He has made certain Laws for man to follow during his life time. These laws dictate that good deeds will produce good results and bad deeds will inevitably produce bad results. As such a man will go automatically to eternal bliss in heaven if his good deeds outweigh the bad deeds during his life time but he will go to hell inevitably if his bad deeds outweigh his good deeds.

Allah's Mercy will not come into play on its own because if that was the case then Allah would not have created these laws. However, if Allah's pardon is sought in the way that He has designated during one's lifetime here on earth then there is a possibility that Allah may forgive the individual and grant him heaven. But it must be noted that Allah's Mercy will certainly not come into play on its own. In order to activate it we must ask pardon for our sins and desist from any further transgression of His laws and commands.

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Dear Reader ! We await your opinion about this Booklet with eagerness in order to make later editions more useful and comprehensive.

Author.

Allah Ki 'Marzi' or Allah's Will

Muslims all over the world tend to say 'Allah ki marzi' or 'it was Allah's will' whenever they encounter some mishap or unforeseen circumstance, mostly unwanted result. By mouthing this sentence they mean that since it was the Will of the All Powerful Allah things turned out as they did even if they were not in their favor! They say this because they want to appear very pious in bearing it all bravely even though they may not be very pious in the course of their lives!

But by mouthing these words 'Allah ki marzi' they are attributing something to Allah which does not belong to Him and since usually this something is not too savory it is a sort of accusation!

The fact of the matter is that Allah has created certain laws and guided us through His Prophet SAW as to how to spend our lives if we are to be successful in this life as well as in the hereafter. Our prophet Muhammad SAW lived his life according to the Quran and exactly as Allah wants all human beings to follow as best they can. The prophet left behind him the holy book of Quran for all mankind to follow till the Day of Judgment if it wants to be successful. But it is also a fact that we Muslims do not follow the laws of the Qur'an.

Consequently, the results of many things we do in life contrary to the teachings of the Quran produce bad results which are not to our liking. When this happens we start attributing the results to Allah by saying 'Allah ki marzi'! This is patently unfair because how can we attribute results to Allah when we do not follow His laws? Allah has created laws whereby good deeds inevitably produce good results and bad deeds produce bad results.

In any case Allah has nothing to do with any individuals' deeds except to reward him or punish him on merit on the Day of Judgment but that comes long after we are dead. Allah intervenes only in the rarest of cases or where he actually Wills which is very, very rare. So whenever we say it is 'Allah ki marzi' we must think twice. We should consider that somewhere we must have done something which was not right to have produced the sort of result that has indeed been produced even if we might know where we went wrong. In any case whatever the result it is probably due to something we said or did ourselves along the line and Allah had nothing to do with it.

As for the contention 'Allah ki marzi' we simply try to imply that Allah is all powerful and He can do what he wants. Allah indeed is all powerful and indeed does whatever He wills and He does not need our double meaning phrases to appear all powerful. Therefore we must desist from saying 'Allah ki marzi' if we are not really relying on His judgment by not acting on His laws!

Believing As Our Ancestors Did

The minds of us Easterners have been ingrained with respect for our ancestors and elders from childhood and that is why we become respectful whenever elders especially our fathers or forefathers are mentioned even if they have been dead for a long time. But respecting the elders and ancestors is one thing and believing everything they have ever told us without putting it to the test of logic and reason after we have grown up, is quite ridiculous. And yet we tend to believe everything that we have heard from our fathers and forefathers even if what they have told us is more of an emotional or devotional thing rather than something which can stand the scrutiny of logic and reason!

The holy Quran, the holiest book of the Muslims which is supposed to hold the word of Allah and not one word of which can be untrue, exhorts us again and again to use our intellect in understanding the Quran that Allah has given us but we tend to believe at times not what the holy Quran says but what our fathers and forefathers have told us! This is not to say that we do not believe the Quran because we do, but it is a fact that we hardly open and read the Quran except on certain occasions during our lifetime and our faux pax is due to ignorance. And when we do read the Quran on rare occasions, we do not

know what the 'ayaats' or verses of the Quran are saying because they are in the Arabic language and we are quite illiterate about Arabic because it is a foreign language!

Therefore we do not have first hand knowledge of what the Quran is saying on any particular subject but we rely on hearsay about the matter from our forefathers or 'experts' who too have perhaps not had first hand knowledge about the matter and had heard about it from some other person! This again does not mean that what we have heard is totally wrong or only partially correct but this does mean that we are not aware of what Allah is directly saying on the subject and that we tend to believe in hearsay.

The best thing is find a good translation of the Quran in the language of our choice and see what it says on any particular subject; there can be no argument about the 'mohkamat' i.e. the verses that contain the orders of Allah and which are unchangeable since 1500 years back when they were revealed to our Prophet SAW; but in case of the verses that are unclear and which can have different interpretations we can certainly use our intellect to try and understand what has been said 'according to our time and advancement of our time'.

We must note that about fifteen hundred years have elapsed since the advent of the Quran but it is one of its specialties or 'miracles' that the Quran can hold good for

all times to come till the Day of Accountability i.e. on the day the dead will rise from their graves and be summoned before Allah to answer for all the deeds during their lifetime.

Whatever our fathers or forefathers may have told us was whatever they understood about the subject and we should not concern ourselves with whether they were right or wrong because they will have to answer for their own actions or inactions themselves and not us.

What our religion requires us to do is to find out for ourselves directly from the Quran as to what it says about a particular subject and if we can not understand a particular thing only then should we go to some learned man for getting guidance; but about most matters that concern the common man, the Quran is quite clear and a man of average intelligence can be able to understand what he is required to do under normal circumstances.

There is one thing however that we must understand: after attaining adulthood it is incumbent upon each one of us to try and understand our 'deen' as contained in our Quran instead of merely relying on what we have heard from our forefathers and on the Day of Accountability we cannot take the plea that 'nobody told us to do so'.

Jihad

'Jihad' is an Arabic word meaning continuous struggle mainly against the predilections of the 'nafas' which is equivalent to self in the mind of an ordinary person. Our prophet Muhammad SAW exhorted us to struggle against our 'nafas' all our lives; in other words the holy prophet exhorted all Believers to struggle to be pious during their lives and to stay away from the predilections and temptations that our libido may be attracted to.

But since temptations of one kind or another continue to attract us during our entire life - with certain temptations attracting us at different times or phases of our lives or more than one temptation may attract us at one or more phases of our lives- we have to struggle all our lives to stay away from these temptations which may and often do dilute our piousness.

But there is one form of 'jihad' which can entail 'qitaal' or killing but this form of jihad can only be undertaken to protect the right to worship Allah freely and for no other cause such as fighting to defend one's country against invaders, for removing oppression etc. This sort of 'jihad' cannot be undertaken by an individual or a group but it is the responsibility of the Islamic state only. Only if Believers are stopped from worshipping Allah

can 'jihad' which entails 'qitaal' or killing be conducted. Death embraced in furthering or defending any other cause whatsoever, however justified, can not be called 'jihad'.

It must not be forgotten that our beloved prophet Muhammad SAW was very much ridiculed and even tortured in many ways during the early part of prophet hood but was not stopped from worshiping Allah by the non-believers of Mecca and he never conducted 'jihad' in Mecca although he struggled all his life against his self or 'nafas'. So when we find people calling themselves Muslims or Believers engaging in 'qitaal' individually or in groups and believing it is 'jihad' they are sadly mistaken.

The Taliban in Afghanistan may be fighting the US and NATO forces to rid their country of foreign invasion but they are certainly not fighting a 'jihad' The Americans or NATO countries do not prevent Muslims from following their 'deen' or way of life or religion in their own countries leave alone prevent Muslims in Afghanistan or even in Iraq from following the religion of their choice or Islam. So how can the Afghanis describe their fight against the American and NATO troops as 'jihad'?

Lately it has become a 'fashion' to recruit unsuspecting Muslim young men to whatever cause one may be subscribing to in the name of 'jihad' like in Afghanistan and unsuspecting young Muslims from all over the world

tend to be attracted to those causes because they are misled into believing that they will be conducting 'jihad' by joining some Taliban force etc and if they die fighting they shall go straight to heaven without being questioned about any other dubious deed they may have committed during their lifetime on this earth.

This is a totally false assumption because nobody is going to go to heaven without being held accountable for his deeds and the syndrome which drives very young men to 'suicide bombing' may be an act of defiance all right but it is not a part of 'jihad' in any case and those who commit suicide in this way are certainly not going to heaven for blowing up hundreds of non combatants and themselves too.

Notes:

What is love?

We consider love to be a very soft, very commendable and a very good emotion for mankind but why is 'love' between men and women without 'nikah' forbidden in Islam? It is forbidden because Islam forbids any relationship including 'friendship' between marriageable adult man and woman. This does not mean that Islam forbids attraction because our 'deen' compels the man and woman or boy or girl to meet each other under supervision of an elder prior to marriage so that mutual like or dislike can be gauged. However it does exhort us to go for 'nikah' or wedlock if attracted to a member of the opposite sex. If not possible for some reason then one is required not to hanker after the subject.

But with the passage of time 'love' has become a very respectable emotion for the average Muslim. This is so because all our novels, movies and art and our songs all glorify the emotion of love i.e. emotional attachment between consenting adults of the opposite sex. We tend to glorify this emotion between man and woman to the extent of saying and believing that 'love is God' whereas our holiest book the Quran forbids free mixing of adult man and woman especially in privacy and by glorifying something which our 'deen' or religion forbids we are unwittingly being driven towards defying Allah and His messenger, are we not?

Love may result in marriage but the man and woman cannot touch each other before 'nikah' or wedlock even if it is in a 'respectable' way but touching an adult member of the opposite sex prior to marriage with him or her is strictly forbidden. This is understandable because one thing may lead to another and before we know it we may end up having sex and committing 'zina' or fornication. So by 'falling ' in love we are disobeying Allah and His Messenger and are committing a sin even though nowadays love is thought to be a very 'good and desirable' thing.

In non Muslim cultures and countries 'love' has become synonymous with 'sex' where a man and a woman love each other only to have sex with each other out of wedlock and separate when their lust for each other has subsided. This is all the more signified by the term 'make love' which hardly even brooks comment today!

So we see that the apparently pure emotion of love can and will ultimately culminate in 'zina' which is one of the major sins in our 'deen' or Islamic way of life. Would it therefore not be rewarding if we started eliminating the longing for this emotional gridlock from our culture? But we find that our scholars and religious leaders are afraid of raising their voices against love because they think that love has become so ubiquitous in our society that any voice or advice against it will be rejected by the people out rightly. What they fail to understand is that

they are scholars and religious leaders of Islam and they should be worried only about speaking the truth. What if people will reject their advice? This doesn't mean that sane advice should only be given if it is acceptable and should be withheld if it is not?

If this sort of thinking is to be followed then it should be remembered that in the beginning only our Prophet SAW spoke the truth about Allah and Islam and gradually the ranks of the believers swelled. If he had been cowed down by the fact that he was the only Believer in the beginning then today Islam would not have more than one and a half billion followers around the world!

Notes:

Destiny or 'Naseeb'

Muslim or 'momins' or Believers all over the world believe in 'destiny' or 'naseeb' or luck and they think that it is part of their belief whereas by doing so they are not only attributing many wrong things to Allah but making Him responsible for many things He is not. This sort of belief also makes many young Believers as well as non Believers ask as to why when man is destined to a certain fate he shall be held responsible for his deeds? This sort of belief in destiny or fate or luck seems to suggest that man is predestined by Allah to do certain things, good or bad, but is to be held responsible for the bad things?

This is a wrong concept; in fact this sort of belief is quite misleading and tends to undermine man's belief in Allah. It is true that Allah has created all things in the universe as He has indeed created laws for all things to follow. These laws are ingrained into the DNA of living beings such as insects, birds, and animals and into inorganic things and they all compulsorily follow these laws during their existence.

Man however, is a different sort of creation of Allah altogether. His body inherently is ingrained with certain laws that govern his body and he cannot change its characteristics no matter how hard and how long he may

try to do so; for example he cannot remove the pangs of hunger or thirst which are inevitable to his body nor can he get rid of the other bodily functions such as defecating and urinating from time to time. A man's body bleeds when cut and hurts too if stricken. These are some instances where the bodies of all men on earth function alike.

At the same time a normal man also possesses a brain which develops in its own way as his body develops with time. Man's brain enables him to learn to speak and have emotions, and thoughts. In this and many other ways he is different than any other animal but the way in which man is different from any other creation is in possessing the ability to function in his life as he pleases i.e. he is given the choice of selecting to live the kind of life he wants. But man has been provided with the manual according to which he can formulate his life and deserve the prize of heaven in the 'life after death' that Allah promises in the holy Book of Muslims called the Quran.

Conversely since man has been given the choice of choosing the course of his actions, he can live in this world as per his own choice and do as he pleases although the result of his wrong doings or not following Allah's designated path or way of life will definitely culminate in invoking a life of devastation in hell after death.

No more is the question 'how can there be life after death' valid because the discovery of the DNA map has proven that the possibility of recreating man after he has perished, from his dead bones or even the tiniest material of his being is a distinct reality.

In any case Allah has sent a long string of prophets on this earth to guide human beings from time to time. The last of these prophets was Muhammad SAW and he left behind him a Book of infallible instructions behind him for all men to follow and be able to go to heaven after death. Through this book Allah has told man in certain terms what is good and what is not in the eyes of Allah and the sort of deeds that can take man to heaven or hell after death.

Man has been given the choice to follow his libido and his instinct if he so wants but what he has not been given is the ability to regulate the result of his actions. Every action of his or every deed he does has its own result. A good deed creates a good result and a bad deed creates a bad result but there is a result indeed for each of his acts even if the result of his deeds may many times not be visible during this life or be visible immediately.

As to man undertaking some bad deeds during his life, it must be noted carefully that while Allah knows about every deed man makes, in no case does Allah direct his deeds. Allah has given man the freedom to act as he

wants and given him Divine Guidance through the prophet Muhammad SAW and the holy book Quran that he has left behind but in no way does Allah direct man to act in a certain way or manner.

This means that while He knows what man's destiny is, in no way can Allah be held responsible for the deeds of man. And yet we, the Muslims hold Allah responsible for the acts of man by believing that Allah is responsible for man's destiny? Being aware of how a man will spend his life is one thing but being responsible for him acting in a certain way during his lifetime is another.

This is like being in a plane and helicopter where you can see a man ahead falling in a ditch who cannot be visible from the ground but can the beholder in the plane or copter be held responsible for the man falling into the ditch? Therefore we should never hold Allah responsible for the way a man acts in his lifetime or his 'destiny' although Allah is well aware of all the deeds a man may commit during his lifetime.

Allah has created a system whereby all acts and even thoughts of man can be recorded during his lifetime and these acts and thoughts will be replayed on the Day of Judgment so that it can be judged whether he will go to heaven or hell on the basis of the deeds he has committed during his life time.

While this concept could be wondrous to people fifteen hundred years ago when the holy Quran was revealed to our prophet Muhammad SAW nowadays this feat is not so wondrous [and not impossible] because we now know about micro chips which can record a surprising volume of audio video data in very little space. Besides it is a scientific fact that all sounds of whatever nature including speech are never lost although they are not audible to us but they are saved inevitably somewhere in the ether or the atmosphere.

The thrust of this argument is that while Allah the Creator of All Things is aware of all the deeds man makes during his lifetime or of his destiny, He certainly does not interfere into man's freedom to act as he chooses; therefore, if a man chooses bad things and gets bad results as he is bound to get for such actions sooner or later then Allah can not and should not be blamed for them because they are the result of man's own doing!

Some will argue that Allah is most kind and He will forgive any transgression made by man; that is true because Allah is certainly most kind but He will not forgive man's transgression of His own volition. Allah may forgive man for his transgressions only if man repents sincerely and does not commit the mistakes again. If man asks pardon for his sins but commits the sin again and again then he can be sure that his pardon has met a sad fate. In fact it is said that one can be certain of being pardoned by Allah if he can desist from making the same mistake once again.

Marriages are NOT made in Heaven!

We Muslims like the Christians believe that marriages are made in heaven. Due to this belief a lot of married women suffer through an unpleasant life and bear many an unsavory husband all their lives. Whenever a woman finds her married life to be exhausting she is told by some relative or friend that marriages are made in heaven so she is bound to go through life and bear whatever comes her way in this married life and so the woman goes through the torture believing she is being very pious whereas she is being only foolish by following this foolish advice!

But this belief is not correct and this is easily revealed to us if we give the matter a little thought. By saying that marriages are made in heaven we signify that marriages are made due to Allah's Providence and have some sort of sacred connotation to it. BUT THEY DO NOT. This is evident from the fact that if Allah had anything to do with marriages i.e. match making His Messenger and our Prophet Muhammad SAW would not have created the institution of Divorce for mankind!

The institution of divorce has been created by none other than Allah's last prophet Muhammad SAW for men and women to adopt in the event that they do not find each other compatible to married life. If Allah had

anything to do with marriages then our Prophet SAW certainly would not have created the institution of Divorce.

The thing is that our prophet Muhammad SAW created the institution of 'nikah' i.e. wedlock whereby a man and woman could live together in this world and raise a family but if they found that one was not compatible with the other then they could separate nicely and respectably through 'talaq' or divorce without getting into trouble. But the prophet SAW in no way intervenes with our choices as to who we should marry or wed even if there are general guidelines as to the sort of people we should look for in marriage.

So we see that while the Messenger of Allah exhorts us to wed or 'nikah' he does not impose it upon us and that is why 'nikah' is a 'sunnah' and not a 'farz' i.e. it is not incumbent on us to follow it in all cases. Also that 'nikah' or wedlock is entirely up to us men and women and we are free to choose who we marry and there is no divine intervention in this choice. Similarly if husband and wife choose to divorce each other then they can do so if that is what they want and again there is no divine intervention because the choice is purely that of the husband or wife.

The divine intervention starts with the permission of entering wedlock and ends with the advice to go separate

ways if living together as man and wife is not found compatible. The concept of 'divine intervention' or with Allah or God having to do anything with marriage is a Christian belief which has entered our religious books [not the Quran] perhaps unwittingly.

Besides if Allah or God had anything to with marriages then would there be so many divorces in the world today or any divorce for that matter? So we see that marriages are not made in heaven, at least not for us Muslims!

Any intelligent man and woman can see that marriages are NOT made in heaven but still we are given to attribute our choices to divine intervention. No wonder we are unable to explain to the younger and the thinking generation why if there is divine intervention many marriages fail to achieve success!

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Mind your own business

Minding your own business primarily means not to interfere in another's affairs and to keep mum about what others may be doing. This policy of non interference in others' affairs is a universally acclaimed policy across all cultures and civilizations and is supposed to be the right thing to do. This is true in all worldly matters. But is this also a sound policy where our 'deen' or religion of Islam is concerned?

No , because if our Prophet Muhammad SAW had followed this policy of non interference in matters of 'deen' or our religion there would not have been a single follower of Islam! In fact the 'deen' of Islam would not even be known through the annals of human history. But we find that today about one and a half billion people around the world, speaking all sorts of languages and belonging to different cultures have accepted Islam as their 'deen' and everyday more are joining the Islamic community and this includes people from the most advanced cultures and countries? In other words more than one sixth of the world population follows Islam.

This would not have been possible if our prophet Muhammad SAW had followed a policy of 'mind your own

business.' On the contrary we find that the prophet SAW suffered all sorts of indignities and tortures from members of his society and interceded wherever possible to state that Allah was the only God we must all follow and that Hazrat Muhammad SAW was his last prophet and the Quran was the Book of God; and that they must give up their waywardness which was due to unawareness of the truth that Allah was the ultimate Lord and Master and everyone would have to account for his deeds in the hereafter on the day of accountability or in 'qiyamat'.

If our prophet SAW had followed a policy of non-interference and allowed the people of those times to carry on in their wayward ways then today there would have been no follower of Islam instead of a large part of the world population following the prophet's 'deen'. Although it is quite rare, even today when someone tries to make some point in our 'deen' such as stressing the fact that 'sood' or 'interest is haraam' or forbidden in Islam or 'the accumulation of wealth is not a likeable quality in Islam' or that 'we must all spend some time each day in following Allah's path aside from saying the compulsory prayers', one is advised by his near and dear ones or those who seem to have his welfare at heart "not to interfere" in others' affairs and to "let them carry on as they want"!

This is a non-Islamic way. It is incumbent upon a Muslim to show the right way to someone although peaceably and

nicely who may be unaware of the message of Islam and may be wayward in his ways. This sort of attitude is quite wrong and does not behoove anyone who follows Islam because it is our bounden duty to spread the message of Islam wherever we can and if someone is not doing the right thing according to the doctrines of Islam he or she must be immediately corrected nicely.

Being a hypocrite and quietly letting the other carry on doing something un-Islamic is not the way a Muslim or a Believer is supposed to behave in society. But of course, the method of imparting the knowledge about Islam must be full of wisdom and must be very attractive and desirable and must definitely be practiced by self, otherwise the message will be lost on the subject.

Notes:

What is a Muslim?

'Muslim' means one who accepts or concurs. As such a Muslim is a person who submits his will to Allah in all aspects of his life. In submitting to Allah the Muslim agrees to abide by the decrees of Allah in all aspects of his life and at all times.

But while we may be following the dictates of Allah and our prophet SAW in what we may consider to be the more important aspects of our lives we many times ignore the 'small' aspects although they may entail big consequences. These 'small' aspects of life have not been made compulsory for us but our Prophet Muhammad SAW has certainly shown us how we must carry them out because they may determine what sort of Muslim we are.

There are many aspects of our lives where we may not be following the prophet Muhammad SAW. We may be saying our prayers, giving 'zakat', performing Hajj, fasting during the month of Ramadan etc but can we forgive others for their mistakes only because forgiving is a trait beloved to Allah and our prophet? Do we visit our relations regularly especially if they are poor to enquire after their welfare and do we help them if indeed they need help?; do we visit our kinsfolk and friends who are infirm and need company even if it is only for a while?

Most of us do not give up their 'egoistic beliefs' and vanity where other Muslims are concerned even if we may be good in carrying out other compulsory acts in Islam. But vanity and ego prevent us from looking after our relatives and kinsmen perhaps when they most need us and by neglecting them we are neglecting 'Huqooqul Ebad' or the rights of other human beings which in Islam is a very despicable act.

In other words we may be very good as far as practicing the Muslim religion or worship is concerned but we do not measure up to the mark where interaction with others, our subordinates, our servants, our relative or other people in the society are concerned.

Therefore, while the acts of worship in Islam and the doing of compulsory deeds (Farz) are incumbent upon every Muslim, the 'little things' are also very important and they determine what sort of a Muslim we are.

We must ask ourselves whether we do these things as a matter of routine to determine if we are a true Muslim or not: we must ask ourselves if we are truthful at all times; whether we are courteous to all whether rich or poor; if we are not abusive to those who ask for our help; if we help others voluntarily or if asked; if we regularly visit our relatives especially the sick ones whatever they may think of our visits; if we are not proud of our personal skills or wealth or whether we consider them as

gifts from Allah or not; whether we are thankful to Allah regardless of the state we are in; whether we refuse to ask any help from anyone else but Allah.

If we find ourselves doing these things then we may consider ourselves lucky to have the guidance from Allah for doing these things along with performing our duties as staunch Muslims.

Notes:

The 'miracles' of the Quran

The Quran is the holiest book of the Muslims and all Muslims believe that every word in the Quran is true because every word it contains comes from Allah the Praiseworthy. This Book of Allah contains many unique features that cannot be found in any other book in the world in any religion. These features of the Quran are so unique that they can rightly be called the 'miracles' of the Quran. Some of these unique features known to man up till now are as follows:-

- a) The Quran is not just a book but it is a manual for humanity because it contains how a Believer or a Muslim (i.e. a person who submits himself to the Will of Allah) must conduct himself in every aspect of life such as in personal behavior, education, bread earning, family life i.e. while living with brothers, sisters, mother, father, wife, children, friends, co-workers, neighbors, members of the society at large etc; in marriage, sex, interaction with different members of society, interaction with society at large etc. In fact the Quran is a manual for mankind from the time of adulthood until his death. No other book in human history contains such detailed guidance about human behavior during his lifetime.*

- b) *The Quran is a manual for human life but it also mentions some facts of science and history; for example it mentions such scientific facts as in the beginning there was only 'mist'; the universe came into being as a result of the 'big bang'; the sun is also revolving; that water is the beginning of all life on earth; that all life was created from a single cell; the detailed early stages of the human embryo in the mother's womb and many more facts.*
- c) *All these facts were revealed although only partially at least about 1500 hundred years ago when there was no telescope or any such instrument and when the human mind and science had developed very little. Nevertheless, all these facts have been scientifically proved by scientists since then i.e. a few hundred years ago or only recently. It stands to reason that if such facts were revealed in their entirety they would not have been understood by the human mind at that time and would be rejected as 'sorcery' or some such thing.*
- d) *Just like the Quran has incredibly mentioned scientific facts which have only recently been proven it has also revealed many historical facts that our Prophet SAW could not have known about because they were not mentioned in history books. Of course some facts are similar to the ones mentioned in the bible or Torah but they are only*

similar and not the same because there are fundamental differences in the relation of the same events by the Quran and other books such as the matter of the prophet Abraham or Ibrahim taking his son prophet Ismail or Ishmael for sacrificing in the way of Allah who Allah later replaced Ismail with an animal for sacrificing or 'qurbani'.

e) Perhaps the greatest miracle of the Quran is that it was revealed to the last Prophet of Allah i.e. Muhammad SAW who was not able to read and write at the time of the revelation of the Quran to him.

f) Another miracle of the Quran is that it has mentioned many things which at the time of revelation were not known to any living being and were not proven scientifically too. But with the passage of time as human knowledge and experience grew many things began to be proven just as the Quran had related them though at the time they were revealed they were disbelieved because human mind had not progressed enough to catch up with the revelations such as the state of the human embryo in the mother's womb.

g) Even now there are many things which the Quran mentions very confidently but at the moment nothing concrete is known about them. Some of these things are Heaven and Hell, the raising of the

dead from their graves, the Day of Accountability when every man who ever walked the earth shall have to account for the smallest of his deeds good or bad, the Hereafter etc. But in the early years of the revelation of the Quran many things were not believed but were later proven right; therefore, these things cannot be said to be non-existent just because we can not grasp their possibility now. Who knows the future may reveal those truths after a time and they like many other earlier things will indeed be proven right?

- h) One very astonishing fact about the Quran is that while many things it contains earlier were believed to be untrue whereas they were later proven right by science; and what is very important is that nothing as yet has been proven to be untrue even though we cannot currently understand many things contained in it at present.*
- i) The Quran is the only book in human history to date that can be memorized even by a child of seven. Millions of Muslims no matter what their mother tongue is know the Quran by heart which is in the Arabic language from cover to cover. This unique feature can not be found anywhere else in respect of any other book around the world in the entire human history until now.*

- j) *The Quran can rightly be called the only celestial book that has not undergone any change within the fifteen hundred or so years since it has been revealed. This means that the Quran is intact as it had been revealed about fifteen hundred years ago to our Prophet SAW. This has been possible because whenever a verse or 'ayat' of the Quran was revealed the companions of our prophet or the 'sahabis' immediately memorized it and wrote it down under the supervision of the Prophet SAW. The practice of memorizing the Quran continues to this day as it will continue till eternity ensuring the originality of the Quran as removed from the other holy books which have undergone many changes since they were revealed because of the ravages of time after the prophets passed away.*
- k) *Even now there is not a single 'rabbi' or priest or missionary who can claim to know his holy book by heart which millions of followers of Islam can claim in respect of the Quran.*
- k) *The Quran is a book that will hold true till the Day of Accountability and no matter which era we live in we are required to follow the broad outlines of the Quran, the details of which have been provided to us by Allah's last Prophet Muhammad (SAW).*
- l) *The Quran has the unique feature of being explicit for the common man as well as having appeal to the*

intellectual finesse of the highest intellectual of all times. Nothing in it becomes outdated with the passage of time and remains fresh at all times. This means its orders are for no particular period or era and that is why it will hold good for all times till eternity.

m) Not a single comma, stop, or some other marking in the millions of Qurans printed every year around the world differ from each other although they are printed in many countries of the world quite independent of each other. This is a unique feature and can not be found in any other book in the world.

Notes:

Muslim in name only

Most of us Muslims in Pakistan are Muslims in name only. This statement may be very shocking to us because at heart we believe that we are very pious Muslims.

However, this statement is not as shocking as we might think. A look around most of us would hardly be able to name a practicing Muslim in the family and those too would be very old men who have almost exhausted their lifetime and are waiting for death to deliver them from the bondage of life. We would find ourselves wanting in being able to pontificate able bodied young men or women who are practicing Muslims.

Why is this so? This is so because of two main reasons. Right from our childhood to adulthood and in some cases even beyond our adulthood, our parents do not compel us or arrange to teach us our religion as they would for any worldly chore such as going to school or doing our homework.

We can say without fear of being contradicted that our parents never forced us men to go to the mosque or say our prayers but they would certainly scold us if we neglected our school or college or our studies. In fact they provided for us as best they could but only so that we could turn into good bread-earners and not good

citizens or good Muslims. They hardly ever set good examples as practicing Muslims before their children and yet they seem surprised when many of their children go against their wishes after growing up?

On our part, upon reaching adulthood we never sought company where we could learn the basics of our religion and relied only on the hearsay of our parents or 'maulvis' occasionally, depending upon their knowledge and mental capabilities for any knowledge of the 'deen' or religion. Thus from non-practicing young men and women we turned into adult non-practicing Muslims and remained so unless some mishap or other made us reach for Allah's mercy and guidance.

So while it is the parents' duty to teach all they can for their progeny from early childhood about their religion and make it incumbent upon them from near puberty age to become practising Muslims without giving up this world, we too have a grave responsibility upon our shoulders. As soon as we grow into adults, each and every one of us is required to gather as much info as we can to help us become good, practicing Muslims because from the time that we turn into adults we have become responsible for our own acts and deeds and will have to answer accordingly on the Day of Accountability before Allah.

We should not wait till old age to turn to our religion and become practicing Muslims because then all we can do is practice some aspects of religion and not all. Any worship or 'deed' that calls for exertion is beyond us at that age.

It must be clearly understood that while our children are young and under our patronage it is incumbent upon us to make them understand what it means to be a practicing Muslim and we must lead by example; but if do not then we shall be questioned on the day of accountability as to why we failed. Similarly ever since we become adults it is incumbent upon us not to rely totally on what we have heard from others but try to find out ourselves what our 'deen' wants us to do and if we fail in this then we should be ready to be answerable on the day of accountability. Only when we meet some difficulty should we refer to some 'aalim' for guidance.

Notes:

Can there be Sects in Islam?

Currently the Muslims in Pakistan are divided into many different sects i.e. they follow different scholars of Islam and also follow the edicts of their mentors in following Islam although our holy prophet Muhammad SAW and his 'sahabis' or close companions, who were also the first converts to Islam never belonged to any sect as we nowadays do and they called themselves Muslims or 'momins' i.e. believers and that was all.

Yet we see many different sects among us such as 'wahabis' or 'deobandis' or 'barelvis' or 'shafis' or 'sunnis' and 'shias' etc. That is not all, there are many offshoot sects such as the 'aga khanis', 'the bohris' etc. In fact there are so many sects of Muslims that it is doubtful whether any one person can name all the different sects!

When the current 'moulvis' [i.e. a person who takes Islam literally only and not in its figurative sense too] are confronted with the fact that Islam is against any sectarianism these people cite some Hadith of the Prophet SAW which says that 'there will be seventy two or three sects' in the world. Even if the Prophet SAW did say this he merely mentioned or predicted the fact that people will divide themselves into so many sects. Our

Prophet SAW certainly did not 'order' that there be so many sects!

This division into sects and sub sects is not confined to this country alone but it is exported to any of the countries abroad where there is even a sizeable Pakistani population and the sectarianism is carried out there too. But the sort of deadly sectarianism that we saw in recent days in Pakistan was in no way less deadly than the suicide bombing by the terrorists being witnessed now. In fact the sectarian fratricide witnessed earlier was the precursor of the suicide bombing being witnessed now.

However the purpose of stating the above facts was to highlight how the Muslims of Pakistan are following Islam although Islam has strictly disallowed any sectarianism in 'deen'. A man or a group of people may follow a certain individual in performing the 'non essentials' but he cannot belong to a 'sect' as such because sectarianism in Islam is strictly forbidden and is even 'haraam' or impermissible.

This is not a myth because we are not told about this by a layman. Perhaps the 'maulvis' are not aware of this truth and those who know do not relate it to people because they do not want to disperse their gathering which comes to them only in following the sect that they head or belong to! If there is any doubt about sectarianism being 'haraam' then one only need pick up any volume of the Quran and see verse the relevant verse. This

sectarianism is standing in the way of inter-sect marriages which leads to disunity in a big way of the Muslim 'ummah' or nation.

So we see that we are all being misled because we hardly ever open the Quran and when we do, we quickly read some passage in it in Arabic without going through the translation to understand what all we have read. No wonder when somebody asks us 'what we are?' we inevitably say we are 'sunnis, or shias or wahabi or whatever' whereas we should simply be able to reply that 'we are Muslims'.

Notes:

Is man superior to woman?

A very popular myth although in varying degrees exists today among Muslims of the subcontinent [India, Pakistan, Bangladesh] that man has been ordained as superior than women by Allah. This myth is subscribed to in varying degrees by our men and this thought is even imposed over women.

For instance among the uncouth and illiterate which unfortunately comprises the majority among men folk of the region this myth is believed with a vengeance and the uncouth and illiterate men folk, especially in the villages, use their women even today as cattle. The women are made to do hard labor, bear the men's children whether she wants them or not and whether her health allows her to bear so many children or not, and yet be subservient to the man in all aspects of life.

Besides the woman cannot demand any facility as her right and this includes inheritance and the right to divorce although these rights are granted to her by Islam and she has to be content with whatever the man or master of the house gives her!

Among educated and emancipated men things may be easier for the woman but here too she cannot 'demand'

her rights and whatever is given to her is due to the 'benevolence' of the man. Here too she cannot demand inheritance or right to divorce. This myth is so pervasive that expatriates take it with them to whatever country they are migrating to and sustain all their lives the thought of man being the 'superior'.

The truth is that Allah has created man and woman as equals to be part of society on this earth through the families they raise together. In order to do this he has created certain specialties not inequality in both man and woman. A man was made strong in order to be the protector of the family and to be able to go out and earn bread. But a woman has been created to enable her to satisfy the man's sexual urge and bear children whereby a family is raised and procreation is carried forward.

If there was no woman then the men of the world would have no family and no children and the business of procreation would have come to a standstill! So how can such an important being as the woman be deemed subservient or inferior?

In other words Allah made man merely the bread earner and protector, mind you, not the 'chowdhry' or lord over the woman. But somehow the verses of the Quran have been misinterpreted to understand that Allah made man as the 'chowdhry' or lord of the woman. Wife beating has also been made 'permissible' in some cases if you ask the

'moulvis' whereas Allah has decreed that the man and woman can divorce each other if they find themselves to be incompatible.

Again the woman's testimony is not inferior to man's because if a husband swears that his wife is unfaithful then the wife can swear back and refute the husband's claim. Only in the case of financial matters two women are required as against one man to provide testimony because women are more forgetful and the second woman can remind the first if the first one forgets something.

Then again if a woman has to testify in court then she is not considered unequal to a man who may testify.

So we see that Allah has not been unfair to women, and men are only their protectors not masters as believed by many.

Notes:

Can Superstition be allowed in Islam?

One of the tasks that Allah assigned to His last prophet Hazrat Muhammad SAW was to remove all kinds of superstition from mankind and make him worship the One and Only Allah. But despite the fact we find the Prophet SAW struggling to spread the word of Allah and despite him leaving behind Allah's word in the shape of the Quran mankind has relapsed into superstitious beliefs!

Some of these beliefs are remnants of past ignorance while some may be relatively new ones. But the most interesting thing that has happened is that Muslims or Believers have given birth to superstitions within their own religion and think that their superstitious beliefs are part of our 'deen' or religion?

This is because of several reasons: one is that when in doubt we turn to other revered books but not the Quran although we have been enjoined to turn to the Quran for the final word on anything in our lives; the other is that due to wrong interpretation of the verses or 'ayats' of the Quran a notion to suit the times or the men folk of that time has been given birth; and the third reason is our own ignorance.

The superstitions are perpetuated by the fact that most of us are hereditary Muslims and only a few of us turn to the Quran for guidance in our lives. Most of us rely not on the Quranic injunctions directly but on hearsay either of our elders or of our religious scholars. That does not mean that all of them are wrong or biased but the fact remains that we rely mainly and mostly on hearsay because perhaps we are too lazy or we do not have time!

Even if we do recite the Quran at times we do not understand it because we prefer to recite the Quran only in Arabic, a language that is foreign to us. This does not mean that we should not recite the Quran in Arabic but only that while reciting the Quran in Arabic we must also follow and act upon its message as is understood from its translation in our mother tongue. Simply reciting the Quran in Arabic may provide some 'sawaab' and some solace to our souls but it does not make us understand what the verses of the Quran mean; and without understanding the message of the Quran one can imagine that a major part of the benefit of the message is lost.

Some superstitions:

Some superstitions which are common especially among the Muslims of the subcontinent of India are as follows:

Black Cat Crossing the Path: It is a common superstitious belief among the Muslims belonging to subcontinent India

that if a Black Cat crosses your path then you must change your course otherwise bad luck shall befall you. This belief is very common even among very staunch Muslims although they have been enjoined to believe that only Allah the Almighty can bring them any sort of luck and that no one else in this universe has the power to bring bad luck to them leave alone a mere animal like the cat.

This superstition can well be understood by the fact that cats are animals and in many cases household pets, especially in the west, and can come in different colors such as white, grey, black brown etc.

Another fact that gives this superstition about cats the lie is that in Scotland Black Cats are supposed to bring not bad luck but Good Luck. That is quite contrary to the belief of the Muslims of the subcontinent that a Black Cat brings bad luck because the Scots believe that Black Cats are a sign of Good luck!

Thus we see that believing in the superstition is not only against our faith but it is also illogical.

Any movement during moon eclipse affects the baby in the womb: Another popular superstition especially among Muslim women is that a mother with a child in her womb should lie almost immobile during an eclipse otherwise the child she is bearing may get deformed in some way; it

may have a split upper lip, or its lips may be sewn together, or its ears may be pierced or some such thing that will mark the baby for life.

This is a fictitious belief and if it had any substance then our prophet Muhammad SAW would have advised us and there would be authentic proof of his advice and not just hearsay as it is at present.

The completion of a baby in the mother's womb is purely a biological function and it has nothing to do whatever with the eclipse of the moon and the sun. There is no evidence, religious or scientific, to the effect that the two are inter-connected in any way.

As to many children having deformities of the sort mentioned above are also purely coincidental because these deformities manifest themselves only in a very small number of babies that were in their mothers' wombs at the time of the eclipse.

If babies in wombs were inevitably affected by the movement of the mother during the eclipse all repeat all babies in wombs at that time would be deformed at birth which they are not! Thus we see that it is only a myth that has somehow become a superstitious belief in the course of time although our 'deen' strictly calls on us to give up all superstition.

'Nikah' or wedlock is not permissible during the months of 'Ramadan' or the month of Muharram especially during its first ten days: Although there is nothing in our holy book the Quran that says that it is not permissible to hold 'nikah' or a wedding during the months of Muharram or Ramadan nor has our prophet Muhammad SAW ever said that wedlock in these holy months is forbidden or impermissible, many among us tend to believe that 'nikah' is forbidden during these days.

The belief stems from the fact, but it has never been substantiated by our prophet SAW nor does our holy book Quran advocate against it, that the month of Ramadan is very holy because we fast during this month and it must not brook any merry making during this month.

Then again Muharram is a month of mourning and it may be not a very good practice to hold any happy event such as the 'nikah' during this month? The 'deen' of Islam has nowhere said that Muharram is a holy month and it is a belief among some Muslims only because of their own belief and not because of something that our Prophet SAW has said or our Quran has says.

Regarding Ramadan it can be said that it does not brook the sort of merry making seen nowadays during 'nikahs' and weddings but there is certainly no bar as such on holding 'nikah' during day or night. Any bar that we may follow is only a part of tradition or practice but not a part of our religion or 'deen'.

The Ultimate Liberation

Islam is a religion which provides man with the ultimate liberation. This liberation comes to man with the belief in Allah as the Most Merciful, the Most Powerful. By believing in Allah a man can shed all the fears that may accost him in this life. These fears are not only from external elements but may also be internal arising out of his needs and from his own psyche.

By believing in Allah a man believes that He is the ultimate Provider and provides for all that is necessary to his existence. Besides He can be called upon through prayer to fulfill any pious desire a man may nurture. For a Believer Allah is the ultimate savior and He can protect man from any and all evil be it physical or meta-physical. For the Believer Allah is the only source which can meet all his needs and provide any assistance and the inspiration that a man may need in his entire lifetime.

Man considers Allah as the ultimate source for all his needs because Allah is the only Being that a man can constantly pray to at any time aside from the designated timings for fulfilling his unending needs and who never tires of demands being made on him by man. All other sources can tire of man's unending demands but only Allah can sustain the unending demands made on Him.

Another important thing is that no matter how much a man may have sinned he can always ask Allah for forgiveness and if his quest is sincere he can feel that he has been forgiven. This quality of being referred to or being asked for pardon even after the worst of deeds can not be found anywhere except in Allah's forgiveness.

Thus we see that by believing in Allah a man asks for help only from Allah and from no other human being. Conversely a man is also not afraid of any other human being if he believes in Allah. Besides a man's faith in Allah makes him believe that Allah will extricate him from any and all troubles he may face in this life. Thus we see that a man who believes in Allah is self sufficient no matter how lowly or highly placed he may be in this life!

It is true that in this worldly life we find that most of those who claim to be Believers do not actually believe in Allah sufficiently enough but rely on worldly props. This does not mean that there is something wrong with the belief that Allah can be relied upon in all matters. It means that we are not of a quality where we can rely on Allah if need be. But a person who truly relies on Allah as his ultimate Savior is never disappointed. Even today, in this day and age, till the end of this world one can rely on Allah provided of course that the reliance is real and total and not just rhetoric.

Notes: